

Incidents of a Great Race Which Assumed the Character of an International Contest

SHOOTING STAR

BY
GERALD BEAUMONT

A star that bursts the vault of night
And beats the heavens in its flight
Quadrant to quadrant with one sweep
Till night remains save afterglow.

WHEN Lady Courageous, running in bandages, beat St. Ivan a neck on the post in the Pennington handicap, thereby repaying her debt to Sandy McKee, her owner took the little bay mare back to California, and there, with Tod Pennington, set about rebuilding the once famous Pennington stable.

Operating as partners, they bought back Bonnie Brae, the family stock-farm in the Livermore Valley, and undertook to resurface the circular mile track and modernize the training quarters from which in the old days Lord Valor, True Blue and other celebrated Pennington horses had gone forth to fame and glory.

There was one point upon which Sandy McKee insisted with Scotch stubbornness.

"All that I asked of her, the lady did. Never again will I send her to the post."

To which Tod made reply, one arm around the trainer's shoulder and looking for all the world like old Col. Pennington himself: "She's your mare, Sandy, and you're a sentimental old idiot; but I love you."

The "sentimental old idiot" confessed disparagingly and promptly signed the last three words to the treasurer's check of his memory, along with such visible associations as old Col. Pennington's watch, presented when Valor hung up the mile-and-a-quarter mark at Latonia, and a pair of faded red bandages with which Sandy McKee had brought about the return of Lady Courageous.

While Tod Pennington supervised the work of reconstruction, McKee took Lady Courageous north of Sonoma county, the Valley of the Moon, and there she was mated to Cloud o' War, the great Montgomery stallion for whom three foreign governments had bid unsuccessfully.

Bruce Montgomery, millionaire sportsman, laid down but one condition.

"You know my rule, Sandy, the get stays in America. I want this country to retain the peer of the thoroughbreds."

"That suits me," said Sandy. "There's nothing too good for the Pennington colors. All the Lady backs is bone and weight, and your horse has both. The foal will be short above and long below, and if he has the Valor heart, you can look for a world-beater."

PAR into the spring the work of rehabilitating Bonnie Brae went on; and in June, leaving a string of yearlings in the new stables, McKee and Pennington collected a small but likely string of seasoned horses and campaigned with fair success in the east and south, winding up at Latonia, where Firelight, a six-year-old gelding bought from the Keeney stable, romped home in the Pennington handicap leading a respectable field by two lengths.

In winter they returned, and Sandy McKee found Lady Courageous waiting patiently in her stall.

Sandy assumed personal charge of Lady Courageous. He saw to her food and bedding and ministered to her comfort the last thing at night. It was on one such occasion, when he was leading the blanketed mare to water rather late in a January evening, that there occurred an event destined to have a marked effect on the fortune of the Bonnie Brae farm.

The dark velvet of the western sky was suddenly rent by a swift-rushing meteor that blazed a golden trail overhead, lighting the countryside. McKee stopped short, and the mare, plunging on her hind legs, crashed and crashed against the water trough. Her terror increased. McKee clung to the halter and was pulled from his feet as Lady Courageous wheeled sharply and once more collided with the wooden stand. The meteor faded behind the purple hills to the east, and the mare quivered to a standstill. McKee examined her and chuckled reproachfully.

"Wasn't nothing but a shooting star," he complained. "What do you want to bang yourself around like that for?"

When she was again safe in her stall, Lady Courageous, instead of nosing at her food, moved restlessly from side to side, wrinkled her upper lip in a whimper of distress and refused to be quieted. McKee studied her anxiously, and then, instead of going to his own quarters, he procured a collapsible cot and pair of blankets and prepared to spend the night outside the stall.

It was one of McKee's many peculiarities that on the eve of a big race or an event such as he now anticipated, he should elect to find relief in song.

He hummed thoughtfully through the night, there rose from the hushed stable an ancient rollicking melody of the queen's hussars:

And whenever you're jolly well liked, dear lad,
And the company's closing in,
Remember the day when, one in five,
We rode to the Russian camp alive,
Rode to the guns, and before we died,
Spiked the beggars and turned the tide!

Toward morning the chant came to an abrupt close, and a lantern light moved in and out of the stall. A groan awoke Tod Pennington at daylight.

"Mr. McKee wants you to come to the stables at once," he said.

McKee nodded. "I'm having some fannels heated. We'd better go out now."

On the tanbark corridor Pennington halted. "What shall we name him?"

is pretty strong, and it makes a nice name, suppose we call him Shooting Star?"

And though Tod Pennington, with what almost amounted to a premonition, warned Sandy that a shooting star comes from nowhere and ends in the same place, that was the name finally selected for the son of Lady Courageous.

Almost before they knew it, the colt flesh disappeared and Shooting Star was a yearling, an impetuous, long-legged colic of the stable, whose chief characteristic was a tendency to jump out of his skin at the least provocation. Two days after being backed he was following other thoroughbreds around the track, and

thereby repaying her debt to Sandy McKee, her owner took the little bay mare back to California, and there, with Tod Pennington, set about rebuilding the once famous Pennington stable.

Operating as partners, they bought back Bonnie Brae, the family stock-farm in the Livermore Valley, and undertook to resurface the circular mile track and modernize the training quarters from which in the old days Lord Valor, True Blue and other celebrated Pennington horses had gone forth to fame and glory.

There was one point upon which Sandy McKee insisted with Scotch stubbornness.

"All that I asked of her, the lady did. Never again will I send her to the post."

To which Tod made reply, one arm around the trainer's shoulder and looking for all the world like old Col. Pennington himself: "She's your mare, Sandy, and you're a sentimental old idiot; but I love you."

The "sentimental old idiot" confessed disparagingly and promptly signed the last three words to the treasurer's check of his memory, along with such visible associations as old Col. Pennington's watch, presented when Valor hung up the mile-and-a-quarter mark at Latonia, and a pair of faded red bandages with which Sandy McKee had brought about the return of Lady Courageous.

While Tod Pennington supervised the work of reconstruction, McKee took Lady Courageous north of Sonoma county, the Valley of the Moon, and there she was mated to Cloud o' War, the great Montgomery stallion for whom three foreign governments had bid unsuccessfully.

Bruce Montgomery, millionaire sportsman, laid down but one condition.

"You know my rule, Sandy, the get stays in America. I want this country to retain the peer of the thoroughbreds."

"That suits me," said Sandy. "There's nothing too good for the Pennington colors. All the Lady backs is bone and weight, and your horse has both. The foal will be short above and long below, and if he has the Valor heart, you can look for a world-beater."

PAR into the spring the work of rehabilitating Bonnie Brae went on; and in June, leaving a string of yearlings in the new stables, McKee and Pennington collected a small but likely string of seasoned horses and campaigned with fair success in the east and south, winding up at Latonia, where Firelight, a six-year-old gelding bought from the Keeney stable, romped home in the Pennington handicap leading a respectable field by two lengths.

In winter they returned, and Sandy McKee found Lady Courageous waiting patiently in her stall.

Sandy assumed personal charge of Lady Courageous. He saw to her food and bedding and ministered to her comfort the last thing at night. It was on one such occasion, when he was leading the blanketed mare to water rather late in a January evening, that there occurred an event destined to have a marked effect on the fortune of the Bonnie Brae farm.

The dark velvet of the western sky was suddenly rent by a swift-rushing meteor that blazed a golden trail overhead, lighting the countryside. McKee stopped short, and the mare, plunging on her hind legs, crashed and crashed against the water trough. Her terror increased. McKee clung to the halter and was pulled from his feet as Lady Courageous wheeled sharply and once more collided with the wooden stand. The meteor faded behind the purple hills to the east, and the mare quivered to a standstill. McKee examined her and chuckled reproachfully.

"Wasn't nothing but a shooting star," he complained. "What do you want to bang yourself around like that for?"

When she was again safe in her stall, Lady Courageous, instead of nosing at her food, moved restlessly from side to side, wrinkled her upper lip in a whimper of distress and refused to be quieted. McKee studied her anxiously, and then, instead of going to his own quarters, he procured a collapsible cot and pair of blankets and prepared to spend the night outside the stall.

It was one of McKee's many peculiarities that on the eve of a big race or an event such as he now anticipated, he should elect to find relief in song.

He hummed thoughtfully through the night, there rose from the hushed stable an ancient rollicking melody of the queen's hussars:

And whenever you're jolly well liked, dear lad,
And the company's closing in,
Remember the day when, one in five,
We rode to the Russian camp alive,
Rode to the guns, and before we died,
Spiked the beggars and turned the tide!

Toward morning the chant came to an abrupt close, and a lantern light moved in and out of the stall. A groan awoke Tod Pennington at daylight.

"Mr. McKee wants you to come to the stables at once," he said.

got the Cloud o' War jawbone, and the boy can't rate him."

McKee's analysis proved true. Shooting Star lived up to his name. The two-year-old never looked through a bridle that could lead him from the barrier or over the first quarter mile, but in that mad dash he burned himself to nothing. He worked out as fast as he raced, and no boy could make him take a jog. With the flash of the barrier Shooting Star was out.

Gun continued to campaign successfully on the western tracks, and Trafalgar hung up mark after mark at the Montreal, Windsor and New York tracks, conjecture as to what would happen in the event the two horses ever met was the source of argument wherever horsemen gathered.

It was more patriotism than judgment that influenced American turf followers to support the chances of the Pennington colors, for the Canadian

stallion, according to the speed sheet, figured to have the edge on the American champion. Still, it was so small a margin that track condition, relative horsemanship and any of the factors that come under the general heading of racing luck might well determine the result.

From the time that it was first suggested, it was foreseen that his mind and talents to Machine Gun, Machine Gun was the reverse of his half-brother, an intelligent, well behaved colt, who permitted himself to be beaten nicely, and showed a tendency to come from behind. He finished his two-year-old season unbeaten.

Tod Pennington was inclined to be jubilant, but he took care to temper his enthusiasm in the presence of Sandy McKee.

"Mind you," warned Sandy, "Shooting Star is the better of the two; only he doesn't know how to distribute his speed. Some day he will learn, and then you will see a racehorse worthy of the Pennington colors."

Pennington threw an affectionate arm around McKee's drooping shoulders. "All things are possible on a racetrack," he consoled.

McKee nodded. "I'm glad to see it come, we'll break a few waxes ourselves."

The younger man smiled indulgently. "What with?" he inquired.

"Shooting Star," Pennington's grin broadened. "The colt will break plenty of barriers and a few necks, but the only way he'll ever smash a watch is by jumping on it. I'm banking on his half-brother."

Sandy McKee puffed reflectively at his pipe a moment. "All other things being equal," he deliberated, "I pick the colt for what I see through the window of his eye when he's excited. The high lights for courage and stamina, and the flame of the ruby for—"

He paused.

"For what?"

McKee shrugged. "I don't really know," he admitted. "Imagination, perhaps, or desire. It's what makes a thoroughbred run out a race on a broken leg. Lady Courageous had it; so did Lord Valor and True Blue. It's almost a Pennington characteristic."

"What about Machine Gun?"

"It's there," admitted the trainer, "but not to the same extent as in Shooting Star. The Star has almost too much for my liking—too much fire, and I don't understand it. I never felt that way before about a horse."

"THE long, pleasant days slipped past, and as Shooting Star approached racing condition his temperamental peculiarities became more pronounced. Race horses and athletes are alike in that respect—the closer they approach to being on edge, the more difficult it is to handle them."

The Pennington horses moved to New Orleans, and on New Year day, when the son of Lady Courageous, by virtue of racing rules, became a two-year-old, he tilted to the post for his maiden scramble in a three-furlong dash. A plunging, sweating tangle of nerves, he broke the barrier twice, kicked one horse out of the running, and when the webbing finally shot up won by six lengths in thirty-five seconds flat.

The debut amazed Tod Pennington and transported Sandy McKee to the seventh heaven. Shooting Star was a big colt, full of run and fire. He won his next two starts, this time at three and a half furlongs, and veteran horsemen hailed him as the king of the southern two-year-olds. The fame of Cloud o' War as a sire and Lady Courageous as a brood mare spread over the racing world.

But just before the meeting closed McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."

The trainer nodded. "I say he's got bottom and speed; it's nervousness and ambition. He runs half the race in the paddock and the other half in the paddock."

McKee entered the colt in a four-and-one-half-furlong race on a fast track and he finished absolutely last, after spending his field up to the final furlong.

At Lexington they tried him again with the same result, and then Sandy McKee realized that he had a pennington on his hands.

"Morning Glory," averred Pennington. "The colt lacks bottom."